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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS. PRM FOR
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SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN RED CRESCENT AMBULANCES OPERATE IN
EAST JERUSALEM

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas Duffy, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Dr. Amin Abu Ghazali of the Red Crescent Maternity Hospital in East Jerusalem told ConGenOffs that the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) operated five additional ambulances in East Jerusalem and Israel after the Israeli Ministry of Health (MOH) approved the ambulances and issued permits to 32 West Bank PRCS employees on November 29.

According to Dr. Abu Ghazali, the new ambulances responded to three calls within the first 24 hours of duty and reported no problems picking up patients at Qalandia Checkpoint and transferring them to East Jerusalem hospitals. He said increasing the number of ambulances from two to seven will help PRCS handle its heavy caseload. He added, however, that he expects the ambulances to face problems such as random checkpoint delays, the continued back-to-back transfer of patients at checkpoints, and the restriction on entering Jerusalem villages like Abu Dis and al-Ram. End Summary.

Five New PRCS Ambulances: First Day on the Job

¶2. (C) PRCS EMS Department Director Muhammad Awadeh confirmed that PRCS received approval from the Israeli MoH to operate five additional PRCS ambulances in East Jerusalem and Israel and three month permits for 32 West Bank PRCS employees to enter Jerusalem and perform medical services in the ambulances within East Jerusalem and Israel. He said the five ambulances were operational in East Jerusalem as of 1200 local time November 29.

¶3. (C) ConGenOffs visited East Jerusalem's Red Crescent Maternity Hospital, which houses the ambulances, on November 30. Dr. Amin Abu Ghazali said the new ambulances responded to three calls within the first 24 hours of duty: the back-to-back transfer of a patient with congenital heart disease from Qalandia Checkpoint to Maqassad Hospital in East Jerusalem; the back-to-back transfer of a patient from Qalandia Checkpoint to Hadassah Ein Karem in West Jerusalem; and the transfer of a patient from St. Joseph's Hospital in East Jerusalem to Maqassad Hospital. During the first 24 hours, Dr. Abu Ghazali said, the ambulances were operated by a team with East Jerusalem IDs. He reported no problems at Qalandia Checkpoint or in East Jerusalem when transporting patients.

Ambulance Logistics - Getting Through Hospital Security

¶4. (C) ConGenOffs saw the Red Crescent Maternity Hospital's seven ambulances. The two that have been operational since June 2006 bear Magen David Adom (MDA) markings (white with a

horizontal blue stripe). The five new ambulances bear the PRCS markings of PRCS ambulances in the West Bank (upper-half white and lower-half orange). All seven ambulances have yellow Israeli license plates.

15. (C) Dr. Abu Ghazali said there will be three shifts per day, and six ambulances will operate around the clock. Two ambulances will respond to Jerusalem calls, two will be used for back-to-back transfers of West Bank patients at checkpoints, one will serve Intensive Care Unit (ICU) cases, and one will transport patients to Israeli hospitals outside of Jerusalem. Dr. Abu Ghazali said shift work will be divided among the East Jerusalem and West Bank ambulance teams. He noted that PRCS employees with Jerusalem IDs wear blue uniforms and those with West Bank IDs wear red uniforms. After a few weeks, Dr. Abu Ghazali said that PRCS will fine-tune the schedule and possibly create a Beit Hanina substation for one or two of the ambulances.

16. (C) Dr. Abu Ghazali said the increased number of ambulances will help PRCS deal with its heavy caseload. He said PRCS handled 220 cases in November 2007; 82 were within East Jerusalem, and 138 were transfers from checkpoints into Jerusalem. One ambulance, Dr. Abu Ghazali explained, can manage approximately ten cases per 24 hour period so increasing the number of ambulances will help deal with the caseload.

PRCS Ambulances Continue to Face Problems

17. (C) "The number of ambulances has increased, but our work routine and the problems we face will remain the

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same," said Dr. Abu Ghazali. He predicted that PRCS will have problems receiving clearance for West Bank patients at checkpoints. Dr. Abu Ghazali also said the back-to-back transfer of patients at checkpoints often brings delays. He added that the new ambulances, like the older two, will not be permitted to enter villages outside Jerusalem including Abu Dis, al-Ram, al-Zayim and Kufr Aqab that are off-limits for Israel-plated vehicles.

DUFFY